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Romanticisation of our relations with our neighbours, a consequent readiness to make unwarranted gestures towards them and a reluctance to defend our vital national interests in the name of "bhai-bhaism" (brother-brother syndrome) have been the bane of Indian strategic thinking and policy-making.

2.The unfortunate results are strewn right across our history ever since we became independent in 1947. In the case of Pakistan, they could be seen in the ill-advised action of Jawaharlal Nehru in taking the Kashmir issue to the UN Security Council instead of letting our army expel the Pakistani invaders from the entire State; the Indus Water Treaty signed with Pakistan, which is a shocking example in the world of an upper riparian state voluntarily surrendering three-fourths of the waters of a river system to the lower riparian state and agreeing to provisions which enable the lower riparian state to hold the upper riparian to ransom; the failure of Indira Gandhi to force Pakistan to sign a formal agreement with India on the future of J&K in return for the release of the thousands of Pakistani prisoners of war taken during the 1971 war; the action of the I.K.Gujral Government in ordering the winding-up of India's covert action capability as an unilateral gesture to Pakistan, which has not been reciprocated till today; and the "kabi garam, kabi naram" ("Sometimes hot, sometimes soft") policy followed by the present Government, which are misinterpreted in Islamabad as indicating a welcome (to Pakistan) woolly-headedness.

3. In the case of China, the results could be seen in our failure to stand by the Tibetans in the 1950s and to protect our territories all along the Sino-Indian border; the Sino-Indian war of 1962; our failure to adequately strengthen the capability of our intelligence agencies to cover China so that India is not taken by surprise again; the decision of the present Government to divert some of the new institutions created after the 1962 war to keep a better eye on China away from the purposes for which they were created; and the re-emergence of the romanticising trait in our policy-making towards China as seen in the debate on the forthcoming visit of our Prime Minister, A.B.Vajpayee, to China from June 22 to 26. Our lotus-eating habit was seen again in the manner in which the Government undertook an exercise after the Kargil war of 1999 to revamp our intelligence apparatus. The exercise was almost totally

Pakistan-centric and paid little attention to strengthening our capability vis-a-vis China .

4. More self-confident than in the past because of its growing economic and military strength and international stature, would China forget what it regards as the historic wrongs of the past and prove itself a benign force of the region?

5. The Chinese themselves have been keen to reassure the people of the region that they have nothing to fear from the new and strong China that is rising in their midst.

6. But its reassuring words and demeanour have not calmed the inner disquiet in the region because of the unpleasant reality that China has never been lacking in reassuring words. What it has often been lacking is in matching action.

7. When China chooses to enforce its "historic claims to sovereignty" over a certain territory, whether it be in relation to India, Vietnam or the Philippines, it does not look upon it as an expansion or aggression against other countries. Instead, it views it as a justified action in self-defence undertaken in its own territory, which was unjustifiably under the control of others.

8. India has been repeatedly a victim of this dichotomy in relation to China's clandestine assistance to Pakistan in the fields of nuclear and missile technologies---proved actions hostile to India's interests, which were totally at variance with its reassuring denials of any such actions.

9. It is this trait of determination in action, which it looks upon as justified in its national interests, concealed behind a facade of feigned goodwill, which makes the countries of the region uneasy over the China of tomorrow and which should make our policy-makers too equally uneasy. They are concerned not only over its growing economic strength and military capability, but also over the increasing emphasis on Chinese nationalism as the cementing force to prevent a fate similar to that of the erstwhile USSR overtaking the country.

10. In Chinese perception, the collapse of the Soviet Union could be attributed to Mikhail Gorbachev's mistimed priority to political liberalisation without first achieving economic modernisation and prosperity and the failure to substitute a new uniting force in the place of the dissolving communist ideology. They are determined not to commit this mistake in China.

11. Keeping in view the Chinese sensitivities to anything appearing as external pressure or containment, the emphasis in policy-making in the region is not on how to counter the growing Chinese power, which is an inevitable reality, and the re-assertion of its nationalism, but on how to manage and moderate it so that it remains a force for the benefit of the region.

12. Managing the emerging Chinese giant has inevitably meant welcoming it to regional and international fora for greater interaction; and encouraging the flow of investments and trade to it in the hope that a China dependent on external elements for its prosperity, stability and strength would develop a stake in regional peace and stability and in maintaining harmonious relations with its neighbours.

13. Would a prosperous and self-confident China forget what it looks upon as the historic wrongs of the past and focus more on the future? One hopes it would, but one should not overlook the Chinese trait of viewing mutual accommodation as eventual accommodation on its terms.

14. However, Chinese external policies are rarely static. They keep constantly evolving, taking into consideration the changed circumstances of the moment and its dynamic perceptions of its national interests. Nowhere is the impact of such evolution on its policy-making more evident than in respect of its relations with Pakistan.

15. Giving to the Pakistani armed forces a feeling of psychological parity with India and keeping India pre-occupied with Pakistan are still important objectives of Chinese policy-making in the South Asian region. It was these objectives, which have made China clandestinely help Pakistan in acquiring military nuclear and missile delivery capability, disregarding Indian concerns and US threats to impose sanctions against Chinese companies.

16. It was again these objectives which made China help Pakistan in reinforcing the capability of its Air Force after that capability stood in danger of degradation following the US sanctions under the Pressler Amendment since 1990. It was again these objectives which made China organise an emergency supply of missiles, aircraft and military spare parts for Pakistan through the Karakoram Highway last year, after India mobilised its troops and moved them to the Pakistan border following the abortive attack by Pakistan-backed terrorists on the Indian Parliament House in December, 2001.

17. It is again these objectives which are behind China's recent decisions to help Pakistan in developing the Gwadar port on the Mekran Coast in Balochistan in order to reduce its economic and strategic dependence on the vulnerable Karachi port; strengthening its naval capability to overcome the deficiencies noticed during the mobilisation of last year; and making full use of its share of water under the Indus Water Treaty for hydel purposes in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK) in order to make it even more difficult for India than at present to seek a review of the treaty in India's favour.

18. While China's core objectives to keep India confronted with a credible military threat from Pakistan in order to reduce its strategic maneuverability and to hamper its efforts to catch up with the Chinese economy remain unaltered, its political stance on Indo-Pakistan issues has been evolving in a direction less detrimental to India. It has been showing greater sensitivity to India's views and concerns on the Kashmir issue. The automatic reflux of the past of supporting Pakistan on Indo-Pakistan bilateral issues is less evident now.

19. There have been positive developments in India's relations with China since Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China in 1988. The Joint Working Group (JWG) on the border problem has been meeting periodically. Though there may not have been any significant progress on substantive strategic issues of concern to India, the JWG meetings and other bilateral interactions have led to important confidence-building measures on the border. The two countries have not allowed the persisting border problem to come in the way of the development of relations in other fields. Bilateral trade has increased four-fold since the last visit of an Indian Prime Minister (P.V.Narasimha Rao) to China in 1993. Subjects such as collaboration in the software industry, other joint ventures and encouraging investment flows into each other's economy, which would have been avoided in the past on grounds of security, are now discussed with growing interest and followed up.

20. China's White Paper on Defence of 1995 referred to the 1993 Sino-Indian Agreement on the maintenance of peace and tranquility along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) as an example of how bilateral problems could be handled rationally.

21. Despite such positive developments, one should not overlook that Tibet continues to be a major area of concern to China. It has been paying more attention to the economic development of Tibet. Even independent reports speak of a change for the better in its economic landscape. Investments for improving the communications infrastructure, developing a tourism industry and improving the quality of life of the people have brought benefits to the people.

22. The economic prosperity has not helped the Chinese to eradicate the influence of the Dalai Lama and the Buddhist religion on the people. Despite this, at present, they feel reasonably confident of their continuing hold over Tibet. Their recent invitation to the representatives of the Dalai Lama to visit China for talks is reflective of this confidence.

23. However, if the situation in Tibet deteriorates in the future threatening the Chinese position, the presence and activities of the Dalai Lama and his followers in Indian territory could again become a major issue of contention, leading to the Chinese re-kindling the border to exercise pressure on India.

24. So long as Tibet is not finally and totally pacified to their satisfaction with the Dalai Lama out of the way, China may not agree to any substantive progress on the border. It would be inadvisable to believe that Chinese appetite for territory at Indian expense has been satiated and that it is only a question of time before an agreement is reached on the border with only minor adjustments from the LAC in various sectors.

25. Media speculation speaks of a welcome change in the attitude of China towards accepting India's claim of Sikkim being an integral part of India. One hopes this is true, but one doubts whether it could be. It is not at all certain that the Chinese have reconciled themselves to the existing position in the Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh sectors. Should anti-India political ferment develop in those areas in future due to alienation of the local population from the Government of India, the Chinese may be only too ready to exploit it to reinforce their claims.

26. The present policy of constructive engagement with China, which was initiated by Rajiv Gandhi, has evolved satisfactorily despite the temporary hiccups after India's nuclear tests (Pokhran-II) of May, 1998, but the positive results achieved so far should not lull us into thinking that we may have to worry less about China in the future. Chinese policies towards India and its neighbours, particularly Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar, would and should continue to be of major concern to India's policy-makers, whether they openly admit it or not.

27. Similarly, India's policies towards China, and particularly Tibet, and its relations with the US would continue to be of major concern to China, even though it may not openly say so. China had always suspected that despite its overt policy of non-alignment, India had been over the years covertly collaborating with the USA to monitor China. US media reports in the last decade of a possible India-US hand in the Khampa revolt of the 1950s in Tibet and the details given in a recent book "Spies in the Himalayas" of an alleged joint project of the USA's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and India's Intelligence Bureau (IB) to keep track of nuclear and missile developments in China would have only added to the Chinese concerns. India need not be unduly worried over this. If continued co-operation with the US is considered necessary in our national interests, we need not shirk from it, but without giving a wrong impression that we are ganging up against China.

28. China does not heed our concerns over its clandestine collusion with Pakistan, which poses serious threats to our security. Why should we be unduly sensitive to its concerns over our co-operation with the US, which is motivated more by our need to protect ourselves than by any desire to hamper China's emergence as a major power?

29. Our Prime Minister will be in China at two important points in its transition from a developing to a developed country aspiring to overtake Japan and catch up with the US by 2020, economically, militarily and technologically. Its aspirations of catching up with the USA militarily and technologically may remain pipedreams, but its catching up with the US economically is within the realms of possibility.

30. The first transition, which is already under way, is economic. It marks the beginning of the transition of the coastal regions of Guangdong, Fujian and Shanghai, which were the first to open up their economy to the outside world, from a low-tech (textiles, leather articles, sports goods etc) to a medium and hi-tech economy (computer hardware, software etc) and from a predominantly manufacturing to the services sector. It also marks the beginning of the transition of the interior regions of China (central and Western), which had till now not benefited from the opening-up, from a predominantly agricultural and mineral-producing economy to a manufacturing (essentially low and medium tech) economy.

31. The economic transition is also marked by a vigorous modification of the manufacturing sector in order to weed out unprofitable state-owned enterprises. Before China opened up in 1979, most of its manufacturing industries were located in the interior areas for reasons of security. Thus, the modification already under way and the weeding out of the inefficient state-owned enterprises are likely to have socially a more destabilising effect on the interior and outlying provinces than in the coastal regions.

32. This economic transition is being accompanied by a transition in the quality and expertise of the political leadership, which would manage it. Between 1979 and 2002, when the opening-up of the coastal regions received priority over that of the interior regions, the leaders, who were chosen by the party to manage this, came to Beijing after having made a name as successful political and economic managers in the coastal belt. Typical examples are those of Jiang Zemin, former President, and Zhu Rongji, former Prime Minister. They made their names as managers in Shanghai before being shifted to Beijing.

33. Many of the personalities of the new leadership, which assumed office in March last, seem to have won their spurs as political and economic managers in the interior areas and understand them better than their predecessors. A typical example is that of Hu Jintao, who has succeeded Jiang as the President and party chief. He pacified Tibet between 1988 and 1992 after the youth unrest of the middle 1980s. The new leadership is more law and order and political stability oriented than the preceding. It is as much wedded to economic reforms as its predecessors, but is expected to be cautious in

implementing them in the interior areas, lest there be uncontrollable unrest and resulting instability.

34. In the past, Hu was known as a faithful follower of the party line and not as a policy innovator and also as an over-cautious man. As a British analyst sarcastically remarked last year, he had never mistimed a step in his political career because he never took any. That is how he managed to rise to the top despite periodic speculation whether he would do so ever since Deng Xiao-ping reportedly chose him as the No. 2 to Jiang. It remains to be seen whether he lives true to this reputation or breaks away from it and takes China to greater heights.

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